

## **Signature Ceremony for Israel-Jordan Qualifying Industrial Zone Designation**

**Ambassador Charlene Barshefsky  
U.S. Trade Representative**

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Good afternoon. I am very pleased and proud to be here with each of you; and let me begin by recognizing our honored guests.

The Honorable Natan Sharansky, Minister of Trade for the State of Israel.

His Excellency Ambassador Marwan Jamil Muasher, of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

The Honorable Leni ben-David, Deputy Chief of Mission for the Israeli Embassy.

Members of the Arab-American Chamber of Commerce, and others with us today.

### **ONE YEAR LATER**

One year and nine days ago, we met here to inaugurate the first Israeli-Jordanian Qualifying Industrial Zone – a complex of businesses and factories employing about 1100 people at Irbid in Jordan, whose products would be eligible for duty-free shipment to the United States.

Today, we are here to declare that experiment a resounding success. The Irbid Qualifying Industrial Zone has already outgrown its initial boundaries. It now includes more than fifty factories -- including a textile factory with a direct American stake. Last year I had predicted employment might grow rapidly to 1700 workers; but today Irbid employs more than 4,000 people. As Minister Sharansky said last year, with the Irbid project “the fruits of peace are evident to anybody with eyes to see and ears to hear.”

This is a truly remarkable development. At Irbid we see Israelis and Arabs working together; prospering together; building a future together. And in this project we have an example of what the Middle East can become: as economic cooperation develops, common interests grow; international understanding deepens with them; and peace strengthens. In a sense, this project is helping to realize in our time the words of Isaiah:

“Violence shall no more be heard in your land; neither devastation nor destruction within your borders.”

And what leadership and vision are creating for Israel and Jordan; sooner or later we can create for the Middle East as a whole.

## **CREATION OF QUALIFYING INDUSTRIAL ZONES**

So I am very proud and happy to be here with you again, a year later, to celebrate the success of the Irbid project. And I have the special pleasure of, at the same time, keeping a promise I made last year – that in time we would see more qualifying industrial zones, more economic cooperation, more jobs and more prosperity in the Middle East.

Today, we will begin by expanding the Irbid Qualifying Industrial Zone. We will designate 40 new hectares of land as eligible for inclusion in Irbid's duty-free treatment program. This will enable up to 30 new factories, employing as many as 10,000 people according to our Jordanian friends, to take advantage of the duty-free privileges – beginning as early as this June.

At the same time, we will create a new Qualifying Industrial Zone.

The Gateway Project is six miles south of the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, along the Israel-Jordan border. At its inception, this will include eight companies, and is likely to employ between three and four thousand people. The companies will break ground for the project in the months ahead, and will construct a bridge between the Israeli and Jordanian sides of the zone.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many of you here helped to lay the groundwork for the projects we designate today. Each of you should be very proud of your work.

Let me give special thanks and recognition to Dov Lautman and Omar Salah, the business leaders who organized the Irbid Park, for their vision and commitment to the project; and to Gilli Dekel and Yousef Dajani, organizers of the Gateway Project.

I also want to thank the staff of Jordan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the Israeli Trade Ministry, the Embassies of Jordan and Israel; our Embassy staffs in Amman and Tel Aviv; and USTR's Office of Europe and the Mediterranean. Minister Sharansky, of course, deserves special credit for his work to complete these projects.

The one individual most responsible for the success of the Irbid project and for today's new announcements, however, is no longer with us. That is of course His Majesty King Hussein bin Talal, who passed away in February. It is his vision -- as he said at the conclusion of the Wye Memorandum, "our commitment to the welfare and happiness and security and future of our peoples" -- that we are helping in our small way to realize today. And it is with a profound sense of gratitude to him and his lifetime of work for peace that we will conclude these designations.

Again, I will repeat the promise I made last year – this is simply the beginning. We will continue the work, with King Abdullah and the Jordanian government, and with the next Israeli government, to help Israel, Jordan and other nations of the Middle East find common interests and shared prosperity.

I thank you all for coming, and I look forward to many more events like this one in the months and years to come.